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Writing Sample

Hagar Peeters

Includes "LAST NIGHT I CAME ACROSS MY PARENTS," "A SOFT-SMOOTH STONE," "THE SELFSAME SEA," "GODHELPUS THAT FATHER OF MINE," "DREAM IMAGE," "IF EVER," "ON THE PHOTO OF THE LOVE I FELL IN LOVE WITH AT THE SIGHT OF HIS PHOTO," "THE MUSE'S MARGINAL NOTES," BEING IN LOVE LASTS NO MORE THAN A YEAR," "WE TOO, TINY TITANS," and "HAGARS ASPIRATIONS."

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Hagar PEETERS

LAST NIGHT I CAME ACROSS MY PARENTS

Last night I came across my parents,
two pallid figures that inclined towards each other in the white light
of a lantern.

Judging from their joyous state I was as yet unborn. They were both
young and much in love.
A great sadness then came over me
because I knew the course that things would take.

She roared with laughter at something he had whispered.
He laughed out loud as he still often does.
We exchanged a courteous greeting
and afterwards we went our separate ways.

'Wait a moment,' I called after them,
we'll surely meet again some time.
Arm in arm they silently turned a corner.

A SOFT-SMOOTH STONE

I am the stone my parents once decided they would stumble into one
time only, thus alone.

I am the stumbling pebble in the gravel at the front door of their
fake facade, the tablet stone that makes known when the first house
disappeared,

the slab on the grave of one without a surname, the boulder Sisyphus
was sentenced by the gods, I am the block that's round the cripple's
ankle bone.

I chop myself into a thousand toes
to stumble only often into nothing.
I am a soft-smooth stone from which no shoot can spring.

THE SELFSAME SEA

Only I know both my parents
who to avoid the repetition of their error bathed one time only in the
selfsame sea.

Since then their lives have gone their separate ways like coasts of
some great sea on which I sail so I, out of their sight, can find
another shore.

In the far distance I sense land ahead.

Once more on terra firma, shall I not succeed in making for myself a
home port safe and sound because each waterway upsets my need and will
not settle down?

GODHELPUS THAT FATHER OF MINE

Godhelpus that father of mine always had to be top dog where injustice
was concerned.

He was a fellow traveller, co-mover
on the waves of history, described them with a sure hand, bulletless
and resolute he ventured into distant misty places, in further than
the shirt and then the skirt raised by my mother to give birth to me.

Goddammit my father who I was so proud of that I wanted to follow him,
a fellow wee kiddie me; and even on his knee I travelled upsadaisy on
a camel through the desert with the caravan far away from her who for
years lay groaning in her bedroom where shuteye and daylight were
equally taboo, no outside air, no foreign land and no father's face to
wilt yet further than by my birth

but my father, ay ay compañero, was in Chile, Nicaragua, on a
steamship over the ocean, sat in the nick in Bolivia with beard, hat
and knife finding the world too small for him and on her own she
raised a whole new life.

My footprints melt in snow.

They take the shape of an unintended animal and suddenly vanish
halfway.

DREAM IMAGE

This morning while I still was not awake but no longer slept disaster slipped invisibly on cloven socks into my bed, cuddled up against me and so as not to wake me whispered my name.

While not opening my eyes I saw him
look at me his eyes shut too
stroke the pillow he took for my lips
and that kissed him just as I would have kissed.
We embraced in the assumption of each other.

IF EVER

If ever your touch should merely
evoke annoyance or just nothing, if ever the days close on themselves
to form an endless strung-out queue without apotheosis like death if
ever death has been mingled with us and joylessly sits at table with
us where only the bored conversation of forks is still heard,

if ever your blood is no longer mine
or I drink it and there is more in the room than your presence when
you are there, if ever wallpaper and your coat on the hanger never
make a difference when I look at them, the street's submissive at our
feet,

then I'll ask you to help me in a small casket beneath a tree where we
used to or to burn and throw into the water where we once, to return
with me to the places still there in the photo album and also the
album with everything still in it and our house, the children if we
have them by then, the whole earth we will have to bury together, if
ever

ON THE PHOTO OF THE LOVE I FELL IN LOVE WITH AT THE SIGHT OF HIS PHOTO

With eyes closed he looks up at the camera.
Dance, dance away they say,
intoxicate me with your accomplished thighs describing circles as only
female dancers can.
Approach me unapproachably and show no shame.
The corners of his mouth curl approvingly tense in anticipation they
hang halfway down his lips his nostrils are like buttonholes in a
top-range jacket his chin's adorned by stubble and above his eyes his
brows wave come!
and beneath like meadows round his temples which I will later feel but
in this photo he still does not know that, wreathed by his hair his
ears bob up and down like tiny boats in which I want to sail towards
his face towards the leather cushion of the armchair in which we later
and which much later ends up on the street.

THE MUSE'S MARGINAL NOTES

IV

Don't lay your hand on my hand when I'm holding a pen.
Even when I'm not holding a pen I'm gripping one.
It's the air between my fingers I caress.
Sometimes I stroke the world with it.

Your tormented heart's too bloody for me.
It pounds too hard, a headache's what I get.
I want it stripped of all that's tangible.

Your written voice is more melodious
than all the words you say to me each day.
All pales though if compared to black on white.

Your mouth is just unable to compete
with the description of how your lips meet.
Your mind's too full for me, your thoughts don't fit in next to mine.
They can only amaze on paper.

An actor can really weep while feeling nothing yet all my tears
congeal before they fall to form small paper boats because a ship

capsized inside me.

Every word's a sailor on a paper boat
each letter is a sweetheart peering at the mast, the meaning an aster,
an anchor but please use real arms when you hold me tight.

BEING IN LOVE LASTS NO MORE THAN A YEAR

It has been calculated by mathematicians:
this substance that arises from itself and courses through the blood
but founders in the blood which at length produces a like substance,
complies completely with more such straying.

Blood has a short-span memory,
steering nourishment through mind and soul allowing thoughts to carry
on which themselves are slow to forget.
I could have known:
this unique thing, repeated umpteen times, will prove finite. The hand
that was everything becomes once more a hand and then a bone beneath
the ground, as things will end.

This way is seldom interrupted:
it opens and it shuts, is dumb and makes a sound, it wavers and it
balks at putting down a foot.
It always would discover what is known anew and find what it imagined
it had been deprived of.
In that sense people are like parrots.
We imitate and strive for repetition.

I thought: I've found what I have always sought.
It was to no avail. Holes are appearing in my blood, it has to blow
away.
Despair won't get us anywhere.
There is no argument to be advanced:
you are exactly as you've always been.
Just briefly you seemed different from what you are.
You also could have died within a year.

Then would my desperation not have been much greater.
Now love has come along instead
that stands upon infatuation's grave
and sails more splendidly than on blind lust.

Could I but think it true. I'd rather have blind kisses, the passion
of what is uncertain that I can tame at will to suit my mind at least.
The impulses of the beast are always stronger, I observed:
they roamed throughout my bones.
It does not go much deeper. It's over, they say: it's quite all right
to grieve.

It's quite all right to grieve, but no, my eyes already search for
something new to take the place of you, who in your turn replaced what
then seemed irreplaceable.

WE TOO, TINY TITANS

We had no clue what it was all about.
We did things just since things are what you do.
Performed our deeds and sometimes read a book to celebrate that
thoughts don't die on you.

We pushed ahead because you must go on or stopped short at an
unexpected look for there are looks where meaning's clearly sent,
above all when we wanted what was meant.

We started and we rounded off it seemed but what was set in motion
followed its own path.
We made our plans, though all the while resigned to things not going
as we thought they might.

We just ran out when we had reached the stage that unforeseen things
could not be reversed.
All that we had we left there in the lurch and searched for that which
had abandoned us.

HAGARS ASPIRATIONS
(Translation Donald Gardner)

Let me be one of the decadents and drink with the men, let me follow
you, Baudelaire, Whitman, De Campos; all great victors full of
self-assurance, all those who ride on the backs of dangerous animals
all those who shamelessly raise their voices let me be one of you with
blush and sophisticated eyeliner look.
Cheers!

You have invented the art of being decadent, proud degenerates who
view their decline as a ticket to heaven.
Let me, complete with put-up hair and tie newly pressed, with
waistcoat and trousers and shirt and breasts on my chest and tresses
at my neck that are seized by every breeze drink and drink to being
one of you.
Our very good health!

Tip me onto the backs of your elephants and let me ride with you into
the wilderness.
Let me put on this pair of dirty shorts and follow you, you bunch of
brigands.
I want to set out with the big-timers.
I want to travel with all the big daddies.
Let them show me the world that lies at my tiny feet.
Open up the continents to me, drive my elephants along the path
chopped free with the slaves, let the workers look up at me and let me
with my red-painted nails scratched grubby underneath be one of those
workers and drive their backs on and shout with the braying voice of
the master.
Santé!

Let me grow up in your wisdom and have my share.
Let me wave my fans and cast my lassoes in a single movement.
Make me a partner in your card game.
let me share in the spoils of your conquests, robbers and pirates, and
do not let me always sidle on the sidelines and fear vermin that crawl
on the earth and make lairs in my hair.

My wellies will stamp through the rain-puddles that have fallen alike
- for what do the rain-puddles care - for one and all. I will also
write columns for the poisonous press and erase them forthwith and
rewrite them for I want to weep like a woman for all pain ever
suffered and press children to my tender mother's breast during the

meetings of your club, clan, regiment, society or assembly

and I will reserve the right to reject your proposals, yes, to reject you no matter how much this will grieve and offend you for I do not love out of pity but will gladly join in the pleasure, the hunt, the revels and tournaments.

Santé! Santé! Santé!

Big daddies, take a lenient look at life just this once make just this once an exception so as to create, once and for all a precedent made to be followed by granting me access to all the world's realms and domains that since time immemorial have been taboo for me since it suited the managers of those estates.

Let me chuck cheques around all signed by you; all things that carry your stamp, all inventions where you have the patent, let me finger them easily, sensually, casually throw them over my shoulder, strew them to children, feed them as bread to sparrows, let me play Santa with them, let me nonchalantly administer them make wild purchases with them but at least entrust me with them.

I want the key to the forbidden room,
the code of the computer, the access to the systems, the password to the profitable pastures.

Give me my weapons as compensation
for your power and materials so sorely needed.

Give me the right to speak at table and don't rudely interrupt me.
Dare to speak to me at parties
without banking on a night of pleasure.

I will break off the heels of my stilettoes.

I refuse to go on teetering over the cobbles unless they are flagstones that lead to my palaces, and I reject what restricts my freedom of movement, makes me invisible or eclipses me, I cast it at the feet of those who asked for this before trampling it underfoot and whoever asked me to strip off as much as possible I will ask to lead the way and to leave it at that.

From:

“*Koffers Zeelucht*”, Amsterdam, 2003, translation from the Dutch John Irons.
Hagars aspirations (from “*Loper van Licht*,” Amsterdam, 2008, translation Donald Gardner)